**OPHA 2015 Legislative Wrap Up**

Overall the 2015, 78th legislative session had quite a few successes regarding public health in Oregon. This being a full session, many bills were introduced and many were stalled by the sheer volume of bills. However, the session resulted in significant successes for improving the health and wellbeing of Oregonians.

**OPHA Endorsed Bills**

**SB454/HB 2005- Relating to Mandatory Provision of Sick Time:**

***Signed in to law***

This bill was written to give the Bureau of Labor and Industries jurisdiction over what would be a requirement for all employers to provide paid sick time for the employees. With 47% of private sector workers, 71% of low-wage, and 62% of Latino workers not having access to paid sick time, this bill is important in addressing health equity issues in the state of Oregon. If this bill passes, workers will be able to take paid sick time when either they or a family member are ill and will be important in protecting the health environment of workplaces.

**HB 2546- Relating to Inhalants:**

***Signed in to law***

This bill strengthens regulations regarding electronic cigarettes. By defining electronic cigarettes as “inhalant delivery systems” and including inhalant delivery systems in the Oregon Clean Air act, this bill would protect the public from exposure to vapors from electronic cigarettes in the same way that they are protected from the second-hand smoke of tobacco products. The bill also makes the age limit for the sale of these inhalant delivery systems the same as tobacco products, making it illegal to sell them to minors. If state officials sign this bill into law it will increase the protections for air quality in public spaces and places of work.

**SB 941- Relating to Firearms:**

***Signed in to law***

The singing of this bill into law closes a significant gap in the background check system for obtaining a gun in Oregon. With gun violence taking the life of about one Oregonian every day, background checks represent an important area of concern. This new law creates comprehensive background check regulations for any person that is transferring a firearm to an individual, with certain exceptions including transfer to a family member or for temporary purposes. This is bill puts Oregon on par with other states that have comprehensive background check laws, which have been shown to reduce the number of homicides and suicides in a state.

**HB 3100/SB663- Relating to Public Health:**

***Passed, awaiting signature.***

The Modernization of Public Health Act is written to update the government run public health system in Oregon. The public health system is currently funded through county general funds and federal grants which can present issues regarding flexibility. If this bill passes, minimum governmental foundational capabilities will be established and the Oregon Public Health Division will be in charge of developing and implementing the timeline, budget, and programming necessary to bring the public health system in Oregon up to modern needs and standards.

**SB 478- Relating to High Priority Chemicals of Concern for Children’s Health:**

***Passed, awaiting signature***

Requires the Oregon Health Authority to create and maintain a list of high priority chemicals of concern for children’s health. Chemicals that have negative health effects are commonly found in consumer products, the environment, and our bodies. Many of these chemicals are found at high concentrations in infants and children and some of these chemicals have been found to contribute to childhood cancers and other severe health issues. If this bill were to pass, the Oregon Health Authority would be in charge or tracking these dangerous chemicals; in addition manufactures who offer their products in Oregon would be required to notify the Health Authority if any of their products contained these chemicals. This newly formed system would provide consumers and health professionals with information necessary to make healthy decisions for children.

**HB 3076- Relating to Ground Water that is used for Domestic Purposes:**

***Died in Committee***

Over 70% of Oregonians get at least some of their drinking water from wells. Currently, under landlord-tenant laws there is no requirement for well water to be tested. If this bill passes, Oregon’s real estate transaction disclosure form will reflect existing well testing requirements. It will also amend ORS 448.271 to require that landlords test drinking water for dangerous contaminants, including arsenic, bacteria, and nitrates. Passing this bill will protect thousands of Oregonians from contaminated ground water that can lead to serious health risks.

**SB 824- Relating to Engine Emissions:**

***Died in Committee***

Aimed at reducing toxic emissions from diesel engines in Oregon. If this bill were to pass the Environmental Quality Commission would be directed to adopt standards regulating diesel emissions. The bill would also require a 1% reserve in the price of certain pubic improvement contracts to be used for retrofitting engines used in completing the contract to meet the new standards; this bill would also require the registration of certain non-road diesel engines with Department of Environmental Quality.

**HB 3363- Relating to School Nutritional Standards:**

***Died in Committee***

In 2007, law makers successfully passed a law that removed junk foods from Oregon schools; this same year saw the launch of the Farm to School program, bringing healthy foods into schools. Although these were great strides in the effort to promote the health of Oregon’s youth, junk food marketing was left unregulated. Research shows that junk food advertising has profound influences on the food choices of youth. If this bill would have been passed, it would have helped to solidify the laws passed in 2007 by removing certain promotional activities for foods and beverages that do not meet minimum nutritional standards.

**SB 945- Relating to Preventing Minors from Accessing Firearms:**

***Died In Committee***

There are 28 states that have child access prevention laws that make it a criminal offense when an adult unintentionally allows a child to gain access to a firearm; the District of Columbia also has this type of law. This is important as firearms are the leading cause of suicide in males under 18 years old and the second leading cause in females under the age of 18. 51 Oregonians died from gunshot wounds between 2006 and 2010, 23 of which were deemed to be suicides. If this bill would have passed it would have helped reduce these deaths by creating clear regulations for safe firearm storage when a child is in the home, including criminal penalties for endangering a minor by allowing unpermitted access to an unsecured firearm.

**Transportation Funding Package:**

OPHA endorsed policy recommendations for key pieces of a large package of transportation legislation being proposed by the Oregon Transportation Forum.

* Recommendation: At least 75% new transportation dollars dedicated to fixing existing roads first. *ODOT is committing to spending 87.5% of their existing money on fixing existing roads rather than building new roads. This will achieve the goal administratively without requiring legislative action.*
* Recommendation: $75M for transit operations across the State of Oregon. *Funding not secured.*
* Recommendation: $20M of funding for a new statewide youth access to transit initiative. *This priority has turned into a workgroup that will make recommendations to a future legislature.*
* Recommendation: Preserve eligibility for bicycle and pedestrian projects in the ConnectOregon program. *HB 2274 passed and is awaiting the Governor’s signature.*